Why relative clauses follow Keenan and Comrie’s generalization: a case study on the status of Old Italian complementizers
Emanuela Sanfelici (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main) – Jacopo Garzonio (Università Ca’ Foscari, Venice) – Cecilia Poletto (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)

General outline: In this work we examine the distribution of relativizers (i.e. complementizers and relative pronouns) in restrictive and appositive relative clauses considering diachronic and geographic microvariation of Italian varieties. Our inquiry can shed light on the ongoing debate regarding the categorial status of the relativizers (Kayne 1975, 2008, 2010 Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002, de Vries 2002), on the one hand. On the other, it provides us with the means to understand why the case hierarchy described by Keenan & Comrie (K&C) manifests itself precisely in relatives:

(1) Accessibility Hierarchy
Subject > Object > Indirect Object > Oblique Object (Keenan & Comrie 1977)

In detail, the aim of this work is twofold. (i) We will provide evidence that the standard dichotomy between declarative-like complementizer and relative pronoun as first proposed in Kayne (1975) cannot account for the detailed language variation we observe and requires a more fine-grained classification of relativizers. (ii) We will show that subject relatives have to be kept apart from all other relatives because they have immediate access to a different type of non-operator movement. Following a very old line of thought, we interpret the fact that relativizers display a special form only for subject relatives as the manifestation of a dedicated topic-like position for the subject in the CP layer where the relativizer agrees with the subject. This sort of non-operator movement is only possible in the lower cases of K&C hierarchy if a clitic doubling strategy similar to clitic left dislocation is adopted.

The supposed dichotomy between pronouns and complementizers: Since Lehmann (1984) it has been claimed that two types of categories can appear in the left periphery of a relative clause: (i) relative pronouns and (ii) complementizers. Kayne (1975) and Radford (1981) proposed the following tests to differentiate (i) from (ii): a) the difference +/- animate does not play any role for relative complementizers; b) relative complementizers do not display any case features; c) relative particles cannot be selected by prepositions. However, when looking at diachrony as well as dialectal variation, there are clear cases in which relative complementizer cannot be selected by prepositions, but do display agreement with the head noun. Hence, the question arises how to account for this gradual change.

Subject relative clauses behave differently from all other relatives.
It is well known that subject relative clauses make use of a relativizer whose form differs from the usual one: this is for instance the case of modern French alternation (qui/que), modern Palermitan (ca/chi). The variation we observe shows that this agreement crucially does not replicate the same features found in the TP area, such as number or person, but expresses (i) a [gender], or (ii) a [participant] feature (iii) a [human] feature.

(i) In Old Neapolitan there is a dedicated form morphologically marked for gender: when the subject is masculine, the form is chi (1a) instead of che (1b) (Parry 2007; Ledgeway 2009).

(2) a.  Lo re de Cipre chi se clama Eneo
   “the king of Cyprus that was named Enea.” (LDT 153. 14-15)

   b.  Questa Medea che desiderava tanto la soa dolce partenza
   “Medea, who really desired her sweet departure […].” (LDT 67.24)

(ii) Marebbano, a modern V2-Ladin variety spoken in Val Badia, shows that relativizers can be also specified for the feature [participant]. In subject relative clauses, the relativizer is usually che followed by a clitic (3a), except when the subject is a third person singular/plural (3b), although a clitic for third person is available.
(3) a. **I jogn co laora a Milan va vigne dé con la ferata**
   “The boys that work in Milan take the train every morning.”

   b. **Tö, che te manges vigne dé čern, cumpres piücia ordórà**
   “They, who eat meat every day, buy few vegetables.” (San Vigilio di Marebbe)

(iii) In Old Ligurian and Old Piedmontese, the form of the relativizer seems to only differentiate between subject (**chi**) and object (**che**) in the XIII century texts. However, looking at the rise of the uninflected relativizer **che** in XIII as well as XIV-XV texts, it emerges that the form **chi** is restricted to subjects relatives when the antecedent is [+ Animate], otherwise **che** is found as in (4) (Parry 2007).

(4) **lo ferramento che en cotae cosse se usa**
   “The iron that is used in such occasions.” (AG 191, 16: 281-282)

The fact that the relativizer inflects for animacy, deixis and gender features of the subject shows that subject relatives are special in the sense that they can avoid the standard wh-movement procedure by using a Topic-like position dedicated position (in the sense of TopicP à la Rizzi 1997) lower than ForceP. This also derives why they are easier to process in language acquisition (Friedmann et al. 2009), adult speech processing (De Vincenzi 1991) alzheimer patients (Caloi 2013) as well as their high position in K&C’s hierarchy.

In the same old texts and modern dialects mentioned above we observe that agreeing complementizers cannot be selected by prepositions. This means that point (c) of Kayne’s tests mentioned above is the first possibility to be lost and thus requires at least a third intermediate stage between pronoun and non-agreeing complementizer, namely agreeing complementizers.

**Non subject relative clauses and clitic doubling**

The idea that there is an alternative non-operator strategy for relative clauses also derives the lower steps of Keenan & Comrie hierarchy, since in all relative clauses except subject relatives, the non-operator strategy is possible only if there is clitic doubling: as shown in Benincà and Poletto’s (2005) descriptive generalizations, the scale concerning the existence of clitics in Romance varieties coincides precisely with the case hierarchy in (1) (the existence of locative and genitive clitics implies the presence of dative clitics which imply the presence of accusative clitics in a given language/dialect).

**Summing up:** Relative clauses have access to a non-operator strategy through different means: the subject through a dedicated position in the CP, other arguments through clitic doubling. Furthermore, the feature make-up of the relative elements reveals that the dichotomy between complementizer and pronoun is not tenable.

**Selected References**